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ABSTRACT

This occupational simulation booklet on the newspaper reporter is one of several units resulting from the rural southwestern Colorado CEPAC Project (Career Education Process of Attitude Change). The purpose of this unit is to help students understand the kinds of writing that are contained in a newspaper while acquainting them with the type of work performed by a general reporter. The major activity in this unit is an 11-page simulation of the work performed by a general reporter for a small daily newspaper. This simulation provides students with experiences in writing a straight news story, a feature story, a sports story, a police news beat story, and interview questions. Preceding the simulation section, this booklet includes a teacher's key providing specific suggestions as to what should be covered during classroom discussions and points to consider in evaluating the written materials done by students. (EM)

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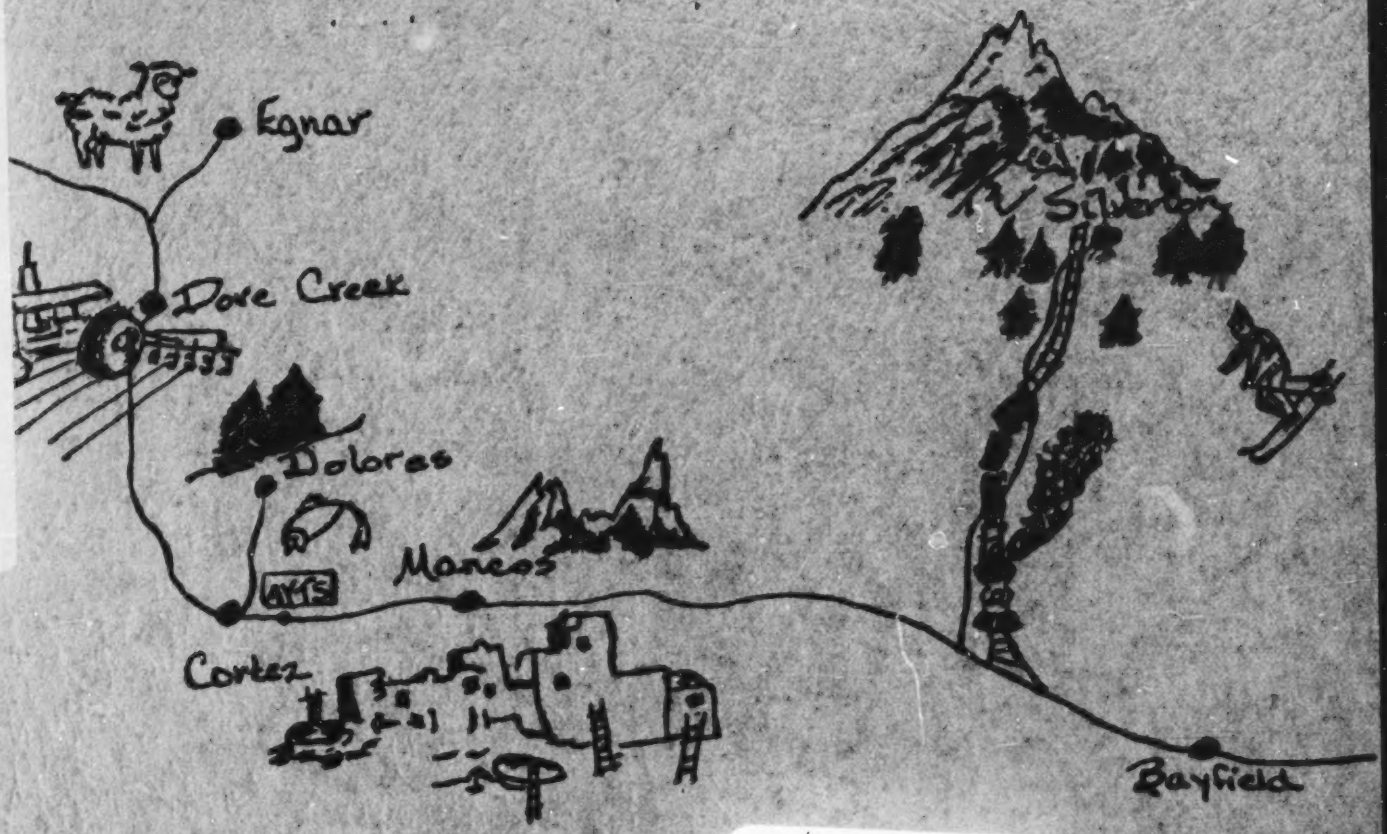

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Newspaper Reporter

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CEPAC: Career Education-
A Process of Attitude Change

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FOREWARD

This occupational simulation was prepared by Linda Frisby and taught in her classroom as part of a comprehensive career education program. The CEPAC Career Education Project is a consortium in Southwestern Colorado administered through the San Juan Basin Area Vocational-Technical School including the school districts of:

Dolores RE-4A, Dolores, Colorado
Mancos RE-6, Mancos, Colorado
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San Juan County No. 1, Silverton, Colorado
Egnar No. 18, Egnar, Colorado
Montezuma-Cortez RE-1, Cortez, Colorado
Bayfield 10Jt-R, Bayfield, Colorado

The reader should note that the career education unit presented here was developed for a particular class and may or may not be adaptable to all situations. This material has been reproduced so that others may benefit from the endeavors of the author and the Career Education Project.

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this unit is to help students understand the kinds of writing that are contained in a newspaper while acquainting them with the type of work performed by a general reporter.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

The major activity in this unit is an eleven-page simulation of the work performed by Robert Walters, a general reporter for the Pinkerton Plain Dealer, a small daily newspaper in Pinkerton, Colorado.

The simulation contains activities which might be typical of those performed by a reporter for a similar newspaper, and each activity is designed to familiarize students with the variety of writing styles and various kinds of stories in a newspaper. The suggested procedures for administering this simulation are as follows:

Before Class Begins

1. Duplicate enough copies of the simulation packet to provide each student with a copy.
2. Read "Background Information on Newspaper Reporters."

During Class

1. Distribute the simulation packets, reading and discussing the first page with students. Suggested discussion topics are given in the teacher's key.
2. Ask students to complete pages 2 through 10 of the simulation. While they do this you may wish to read through the teacher's key.
3. When students have finished pages 2 through 10, go through the simulation with them. Check answers and discuss topics suggested in the teacher's key.
4. After checking the simulation exercises, have students turn to page 11 of the packet to answer questions and discuss topics at the top of the page.
5. If time permits, use one or more of the discussion topics or activities listed on the following page to conclude the unit.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Often a newspaper reporter is expected to be his own photographer. Contact an action photographer and invite him as a guest speaker. He could show some of his work and explain photography techniques.

2. Headlines come in many sizes and styles of type. Using a local newspaper, cut out examples of type and determine the size and style of each. Most annual and school newspaper advisors have a type catalogue.

3. Have students cut out of a local paper and identify the kinds of news stories discussed in the simulation.

4. Proofreading is a very important part of putting out a newspaper. Obtain a copy of proofreader's symbols from your local newspaper office or from a journalism teacher. Have your students use them to correct some of their work.

FIELD TRIP
Tour a newspaper plant to observe all the steps in the printing of a newspaper.

INTERVIEW
Invite a local reporter for a question and answer session.

TEACHER'S KEY

Simulation Page 1

Go over page 1 of the simulation activity with the students.

A. Ask students whether they are acquainted with any people who are newspaper reporters.
B. If some students say yes, ask what kind of newspaper the reporter works for.
C. Ask the students to describe the type of work they think a general reporter does.

In a discussion develop the idea that on a small newspaper a reporter performs a variety of activities on the job. These activities includes:

--selling people on the telephone and asking questions
--rushing to the scene of a breaking story
--interviewing such diverse people as a visiting politician or the president of the garden club
--checking a beat for news every day
--cultivating contacts who will provide news
--writing, re-writing, and typing copy

Simulation Pages 2 & 3

CHECK

Look for the following in the summary leads written by students:

1. Inclusion of pertinent facts without cluttering.
2. Featuring of most important information.
3. Smoothness of style.
4. Correctness of grammar and usage.

Sample lead: William C. Teller, a loan officer at First National Bank, sustained a broken arm and cracked ribs when his car slid on ice and rolled 1½ times shortly after midnight last night.

Simulation Pages 4 & 5

CHECK
Look for the human interest angle--surprise, dismay, etc. Cleverness in approach and humor should be emphasized. The writing should be smoothe and logical, however, and not contrived. Discuss the merits of the various approaches the students have taken in writing their stories.

Simulation Pages 6 & 7

CHECK
Have students compare their questions and compile a complete list. Here is a possible list:

1. Tell me about the giant frogs you found in Africa.
2. Are they related to, say, a bullfrog one might find around here?
3. What do the goliath frogs look like up close?
4. In addition to size are there any other differences between the goliath and ordinary frogs?
5. How does it protect itself?
6. How did such a large creature go unnoticed for so long?

DISCUSSION
Ask why the reporter probably did not ask Dr. Zahl what he did for a living, what his title was, and such questions. (Research would answer them--the reporter should already know this information). Ask why the story is about frogs rather than the person being interviewed. (The frogs were more newsworthy because they were so unusual. If the scientist is really interested in the frogs, he won't feel slighted. He is the one to provide the information).

Review the following tips on conducting interviews:

1. Avoid questions that require a "yes" or "no" answer.
2. Use questions that will elicit answers of local interest.
3. Avoid embarrassing questions.
4. Ask questions that will keep the subject talking.
5. Try to keep the subject from wandering off the topic.
6. Don't take so many notes that you appear inattentive to the speaker or that you fail to observe his facial expressions and his mannerisms.

Simulation Pages 8 & 9

CHECK

Look for clear expression and the elimination of overworked, oblique phrases. No one answer is correct. You might read the following imaginary interview which emphasized certain cliches in an amusing way.

Q. If the teams don't roll up a score, what do they do?
A. They battle to a scoreless tie.
Q. What do they hang up?
A. A victory. Or, they pull down a victory.
A. Which means that they do what to the opposing team?
A. They take the measure of the opposing team, or take it into camp.
Q. And the opposing team?
A. Drops the game, or bows in defeat.
Q. This dropping, or bowing, constitutes what kind of blow for the losing team?
A. It is a crushing blow to its hopes of annexing the Eastern championship. Visions of the Rose Bowl fade.
Q. So what follows as a result of the defeat?
A. A drastic shakeup follows as a result of the shellacking at the hands of Cornell last Saturday.
Q. And what developed?
A. A new line of attack.
Q. How is the first quarter of a football game commonly referred to?
A. As the initial period.

DISCUSSION

Review the following tips on writing sports stories:

1. The lead paragraph of a straight sports story should contain the names of the teams, the final score, the day of the game, and the place where it was played.
2. If a sports story carries interpretation and opinion, the writer must be careful to be fair. He should not berate teams or individuals for their mistakes.

3. Though cliches and slang are to be avoided, the writer is compelled to use a certain number of technical terms of the sport he is reporting. He should bear in mind that his readers are mostly sports fans and not people who are trying to find out how a particular game is played.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY
Assign students to write a straight or interpretive sports story about a contest they have seen recently, either in person or on TV.

Simulation Page 10

CHECK
The information should be written very much like a summary lead. Watch out for too much information being jammed into the first paragraph--there is no rule against using two or three paragraphs. Be sure the important information (usually who and what) is featured, rather than less significant details.

DISCUSSION
Have students list all the beats they can think of. A possible list:

1. city hall
2. highway patrol office
3. sheriff's office
4. chamber of commerce
5. hospital
6. school administration office

Simulation Page 11
The purpose of the questions on page 11 of the simulation is to encourage students to examine their own abilities and personality and compare these to the characteristics needed to succeed in the occupation explored in this simulation.

Encourage students to talk about their own likes and dislikes and about the things they think they would dislike about this occupation.

Work with the journalism teacher to identify resources for further exploration by the student who is interested in this occupation. A journalism teacher would be able to suggest additional activities related to this unit.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON NEWSPAPER REPORTERS

The world is full of news, being gathered at all hours of the day and night and fed to the public through radio, television, magazines, and newspapers. The popular concept of a news reporter is that of a bold young man, hopping on a plane and flying to the ends of the earth in search of news. Indeed, some reporters do fit this image.

However, a general reporter on a small daily newspaper is a different sort. He may be called on to fulfill a variety of duties because of the limited number of staff members the paper can afford to hire. He may be expected to write a variety of stories--straight news, features, columns, sports, obituaries, reviews--each requiring a different technique. He may be expected to provide photographs to go with his copy. He may even be called on to headline and do layout.

If a general reporter is to perform such a number of tasks successfully, he will need a number of basic skills:

--a nose for news
--ability to talk to people
--knowledge of the different kinds of stories
--ability to write clearly and correctly
--good vocabulary
--ability to do research
--ability to type.

A reporter with these raw materials can be further trained to become a valuable asset to a small newspaper.

WHAT IS A GENERAL NEWSPAPER REPORTER?

You will see the kind of work that Robert Walters, a general reporter for the Pinkerton Plain Dealer, does. On a given day Robert might be found covering a fire or robbery, interviewing a visiting VIP, writing about an upcoming town fiesta, reporting on a little girl saved by her dog, or recording regular news from the court house.

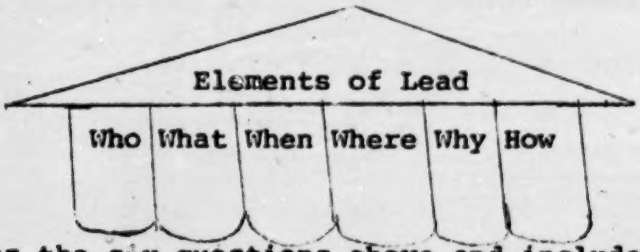
Robert does not spend all day behind his desk, but often goes out to talk with people. However, he does as much business as possible on the telephone to save time.

He has deadlines to meet every day and must plan ahead to have his material ready on time. He must write his stories quickly and type them up himself. He keeps semi-regular office hours, but is never really away from his job. News can break at any time.

THE STRAIGHT NEWS STORY

Robert Walters is a general reporter for the Pinkerton Plain Dealer, a small daily newspaper in Pinkerton, Colorado, population 15,280. Since teh paper is small, he is called upon to cover many events and write many kinds of stories.

A call comes in informing the Plain Dealer that a local quick-service store has been robbed. Robert notes the location and then goes there to collect the facts. He is primarily interested in getting pertinent information and writing it up quickly to make the afternoon edition. He will write a straight news story.



Robert asks the six questions above and includes most of the answers in his lead (pronounced leed), the opening paragraph of his story. This type of lead is called a summary lead.

Who--William K. Curtiss
What--Held up Circle K
When--1:35 this afternoon
Where--1835 N. Filbert
Why--dare
How--.22 pistol
Here is the News story:

Brandishing a .22 pistol, a local teenager robbed the Circle K store at 1835 N. Filbert early this afternoon on a dare from a friend. He got away with about $168 in cash, but was apprehended 20 minutes later in a shopping center two miles away.

William K. Curtiss, 18, of 2329 Vista Drive, pulled a gun on Helen Wismer, who was working alone in the soter, and demanded the money in the cash register.

"I wasn't about to argue with him, the way he waved that

gun," Mrs. Wismer stated. "I handed him the money and he ran out to his car. I got a good look at it as he drove away and called the cops."

With the description Mrs. Wismer provided, the police were able to track down Curtiss in the Eastgate Shopping Center parking lot. He was taken into custody at 1:45, approximately minutes after the robbery. He had the stolen money with him.

"My buddy dared me to do it,"explained Curtiss. "I guess I just wasn't thinking."

You have been sent to cover a straight-news story. With the following information, write a summary lead.

Who--William C. Teller
What--injured in a car accident (broken arm, cracked ribs)
When--12:30 a.m.
Where--north of town
Why--hit icy spot
How--car rolled 1½ times, landed in pasture

THE FEATURE STORY

Occasionally Robert covers a story which is not very significant as hard news, but would still make interesting reading. He writes this kind of story as a feature. Since he includes more than the bare facts, Robert is given a Byline For example, he played up the human-interest angle of the following incident.

No more dry dog-food for Toggles. Now he'll eat the expensive variety every day.

Why the change in life style for this cocker spaniel? It happens that being a devoted pet has paid off big for Toggles.

Cindy Miller, four-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Martin W. Miller of 378 Ridgewood Drive, was playing quietly in the yard with her pet. Suddenly, Toggles began barking excitedly.

At first Mrs. Miller ignored the fuss because she didn't think anything could have gone wrong in the fenced yard. She told the dog to be quiet.

But Toggles wouldn't obey, and continued to yap until she investigated. He led her to a spot in the yard where Cindy had disappeared into a hole in the ground.

"Where Cindy was, at the bottom of some sort of cistern-like hold, crying softly," Mrs. Miller stated. Apparently a cistern had been put in on the property long before the area was subdivided. Covered over with some planks and grown over to match the rest of the yard, the existence of the pit was unknown to the Millers.

As for Toggles, well, he hasn't been barking so much lately. He's been too busy eating.

Read the following facts and convert them into an interesting short feature. Use your imagination, but don't try to be too cute.

1. Dorothy Carter of Toledo, Ohio, suspects someone borrowed her car overnight.

2. When she went to her car to start for work, she found the following items in the back seat: 2 TV sets, 23 bottles of whiskey, 2 boxes of cigars, and a locked tool box. None of the items belonged to her.

3. Miss Carter reported her discovery to the police who came and picked up the loot.

4. At present the police are waiting for someone to report a theft.

Write your feature story in the space below.

THE INTERVIEW

When Dr. Paul A. Zehl, Senior Natural Scientist for The National Geographic Magazine, came to Pinkerton, Robert Walters was assigned to interview him and write a story. Many reporters tape interviews to make certain their reporting is absolutely accurate, but Robert prefers just taking notes. He feels the interview is more relaxed that way.

Robert found out where Dr. Zehl was staying, called him, and arranged an interview. He prepared by studying up on his subject's background and field of interest, and by jotting down questions to ask. Being careful to arrive on time, he chatted with Dr. Zehl for half an hour. Immediately afterwards, with details still fresh in his memory, he wrote the following story.

"Its head was as broad as a saucer and each eye about the size of a nickel," said Dr. Paul A. Zehl, Senior Natural Scientist on the staff of The National Geographic Magazine.

Dr. Zehl was talking about a frog. "The forelegs were almost as thick as my wrist," he said clasping his left wrist in his right hand. "And its rear legs were as thick as a baseball bat." It weighed a little over seven pounds and measured more than three feet from head to toe.

Aside from its remarkable size, it looked like an ordinary American bullfrog, according to Dr. Zehl.

But don't go searching for this yard-long speciman in your back pond. It lives only on the western coast of central Africa. It is the largest frog in the world and its name, appropriately enough, is Conrana goliath.

Dr. Zehl led an expedition to Rio Muni to see whether the big frog was in danger of extinction. Apparently, it is not. The goliath has good eyesight and good hearing, even though it can't croak. What's more, the region it lives in is sparsely populated. Few people there even know the frog exists, let alone that it is good it eat.

It seems strange that so large a creature could pass unnoticed. But until about sixty years ago, it had entirely escaped scientific detection.

Dr. Zehl spoke before the Adventurers' Club Wednesday night and displayed slides and photographs of the Conraua goliath that he had taken in Africa.

Based on the above story, write a list of questions Robert probably asked.

THE SPORTS STORY

Robert occasionally helps out the sports department by writing up sports events. Although sports stories are often written from statistical reports, he likes to attend the events he writes up. The Plain Dealer usually carries advance stories on upcoming events, then follows with an interpretive story concentrating on highlights. Here is an example of one of Robert's interpretive sports stories.

> Despite trailing at the end of each of the first three quarters, the Pinkerton Bobcats went on a scoring spree in the final period to beat the Creston Cougars 74-72. The win puts them in a tie for the lead in the Inter-Mountain League.
>
> Trading basket for basket in the first quarter, Pinkerton came up on the short end of a 16-15 score when the buzzer sounded. The second quarter saw the Bobcats throw the ball away a number of times, costly turnovers which put them behind by 10 at the half.
>
> Improved defense helped Pinkerton maintain the same margin during the third quarter, as Coach Willis switched from a 1-2-2 zone into an agressive man-to-man. It was in the last quarter that guard Jim Smith put in 18 points to make up ground on the Cougars.
>
> With the score tied at 72-72 and 11 seconds to go, Creston's Gary Hallow missed on the first half of a one-and-one free throw opportunity. Big Mike Martin pulled in the rebound and passed the length of the court to Smith, who went in for the winning lay-up.

One problem in sports writing is the use of pretentious jargon and faded cliches. Teams are always "bowing in defeat" or "crushing the opposition." Rewrite the following excerpts, putting them into clear English and eliminating the cliches.

(Simulation--Page 8)

The pigskin warriors from Tech battled the golden-jersied eleven from West High to a scoreless tie.

Tim Moore recovered the oval on the midfield marker.

Bernie O'Brien's educated toe flunked the test.

Mentored by Ray Smith, the Rangers thus far have pi'ed up a 7-0 record.

East High's roundballers, highly touted to crush Ridgeville instead suffered ignominious defeat at the hands of the invaders.

THE NEWS BEAT

Newspapers assign reporters to the likely news spots in the city and nation, called beats. Robert Walters has been assigned the police beat. Every day he checks with the police and sheriff's departments for possible news. He writes some events up as straight news or features, but other items are not important enough to warrant much space. These he lumps together into a regular feature called "Police Blotter." Here is an example.

> Police officers at 1:20 a.m. discovered a large plate glass window broken at Gardener's Store, Tenth and Main.
>
> Manager Don Hauser was called to the store, but inside merchandise appeared to be intact and nothing missing. Hauser estimated damage at $300.

> Kevin Well, security officer at The Springs resort, reports the theft of a 19-inch color TV set from one of the rooms sometime last week. The set was valued at $250. There was no sign of forced entry.

Organize the following information into a brief story suitable for a police beat column.

Who--Marie Ritchie, Omaha, Neb.
What--car window broken
When--Saturday afternoon
Where--east 200 block of 14th St.
Why--??nothing stolen
How--rock through window

(Simulation--Page 10)

WOULD I LIKE THIS TYPE OF CAREER?

1. Place a checkmark beside the traits listed below that you posses:

_____reliability	_____sense of observation
_____enthusiasm	_____good knowledge of written English
_____accuracy	_____typing ability
_____courtesy	_____ability to meet deadlines
_____friendliness	_____knowledge of research techniques
_____ability to talk to strangers	

All the above are desirable traits in a newspaper reporter.

2. Place a checkmark beside the following things you would like to do:
   _____know what's happening before most people do
   _____make contacts who will be a regular source of news
   _____interview important people
   _____see your name in type
   _____work at odd hours rather than nine to five

3. List below some of the good points you think the job of newspaper reporter has:

4. List below some of the drawbacks you think the job of newspaper reporter has:

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